

Moving Missouri Forward

“Building on the accomplishments of 2005, together we will continue working towards a brighter future for all Missourians.”

- Matt Blunt

Education

Education is and will remain the state’s top public policy priority. The Governor is committed to seeing that education receives more funding each year and to fully funding the new foundation formula for Missouri schools.

This year, Governor Blunt has proposed an initiative called Our Students First. Our Students First asks school district administrators to do just that, put their students first when budget decisions are being made and direct at least 65 cents of every operating dollar to their classrooms. With the passage of a new foundation formula in 2005, now is the time for Missourians to decide the level and type of accountability that they want with the tax dollars they send to their schools to educate their children and the children in their community.

The Governor’s goal is to improve education and the Governor is willing to work with the General Assembly, administrators, teachers, and anyone who wants to move education forward in Missouri to improve the provisions of the Our Students First Initiative. The definition of classroom expenditures that has been proposed is based on a national definition. This definition is a good starting point, but could be changed to better meet the needs of Missouri students.

Missouri students deserve the best. Education is, and always will be, the strongest weapon against tyranny and oppression, and the most useful tool in helping the state’s young people achieve their goals. A government that has failed its students has failed to look to the future.

Strengthening Missouri's Sex Offender Laws

Missouri's future is also dependent on the tools that lawmakers give law enforcement officials to protect the people. In 2005, meaningful legislation to end the harmful methamphetamine epidemic that was threatening Missouri and many Missouri families was enacted along with aggressive legislation to strengthen Missouri's laws to punish sex offenders. This year, we must go further. Missouri lawmakers must examine the state's laws and improve them to protect our children, prevent instances of heinous sexual crimes against children, and severely punish those who prey on children.

Governor Blunt proposes implementing tougher penalties to keep these offenders away from Missouri's children. Changes to the law should be made to mandate a minimum sentence of 25 years in prison for a first offense of statutory rape or statutory sodomy involving a child under 13. To prevent these offenders from re-offending, Governor Blunt proposes requiring lifetime supervision of offenders who have committed statutory rape or statutory sodomy against a child less than 13 years old.

Missouri classifies certain offenders as being Persistent Sexual Offenders and Predatory Sexual Offenders. In order to ensure that these individuals are never able to harm any Missourian again, Governor Blunt proposes increasing sentencing for these individuals.

Giving parents the tools to protect their children from sex offenders is of the utmost importance. Improving the state's sex offender registry to mandate more frequent reporting periods in order to update information and distinguishing characteristics would do just this. Offenders would also be required to provide an updated picture for the registry annually.

Sexual crimes against children are particularly offensive and scarring to young people, and even one crime against a child is one crime too many. Governor Blunt looks forward to working with the General Assembly and Missouri's law enforcement officials to craft good, dissuasive, and effective legislation to protect Missouri's children and punish those who prey on them.

Enacting Meaningful Pro-Life Legislation and Policies

A majority of Missourians share Governor Blunt's commitment to the sanctity of life, and the Governor is committed to representing those values and enacting strong and meaningful legislation to reduce abortions in the state.

The Governor supports legislation to prohibit abortion providers from teaching in Missouri schools. Missouri's young people should be taught responsible sexual behavior, but they should be taught first by their parents and they should never be taught by a provider of a procedure that many Missourians find morally offensive. To allow these organizations into schools violates a trust and a respect that must exist between parents and schools.

Governor Blunt also supports conscience protection for pharmacists who object on moral grounds to filling prescriptions for RU-486 or the so-called morning after pill. Doctors cannot be compelled to perform a procedure they believe to be wrong, and Missouri pharmacists should have that same protection.

Governor Blunt has also proposed a change in the law to allow tax credits for contributions to organizations that offer alternatives to abortion. There are many pregnancy resource centers and crisis pregnancy centers across the state. They exist mainly thanks to the generosity of donors and the dedication of many volunteers and staff. Choosing birth, rather than abortion, is a brave decision by a young woman and these successful programs offer the support, and in many cases, love and friendship that these young women need to make that choice.

Responsible Use of Eminent Domain

In June 2005, the United States Supreme Court issued a decision in *Kelo v. City of New London* that greatly expanded the right of government to seize private property—a home, farm, or small business—and give it to other private persons or entities just because they can generate greater tax and other revenues.

Governor Blunt believes this decision was wrong, and that in Missouri, it is in the public's interest to determine the appropriate use by government of eminent domain. Governor Blunt believes a balance must be struck to protect property owners' rights and to allow the taking of private property only where there is a clear and direct public purpose. In June, shortly after the Supreme Courts decision in *Kelo*, the Governor appointed an Eminent Domain Task Force to examine Missouri's laws and make recommendations for improvements.

Based on those recommendations, Governor Blunt believes that lawmakers must define “just compensation”, “blight”, “public use”, and “good faith negotiations”. Missouri lawmakers should strive to ensure that property owners are made aware of their rights and there is adequate time for property owners to engage in the process.

The law should also allow for mediation and recovery for private property owners and protect landowners if a condemning authority acts in bad faith or does not use the property for its original purpose within a given timeframe.

Eminent domain powers should also be limited to elected officials or their representatives and require governments to consider alternate routes and sites.

The Governor supported all the Taskforce recommendations and looks forward to working with the House and Senate to pass strong eminent domain laws that will protect the rights of private property owners.

Statewide 10 Percent Ethanol Standard

In 2005, a new ethanol plant in Missouri came online, bringing Missouri's total operating ethanol plants to three, with a fourth expected to be in production in fall of 2006. The three plants produce approximately 115 million gallons of ethanol per year and add value to over 13 percent of Missouri's corn crop.

Ethanol has great economic benefits to the state. A study done in 2002 estimated that with five ethanol plants in Missouri the state would see almost 9,000 new jobs and more than \$87 million in new state and federal taxes. Missouri is well on its way to fulfilling that forecast.

Agriculture is an important part of Missouri's heritage, history, and future. Renewable fuels offer not only an opportunity for Missouri's farm families but an opportunity for Missouri and the nation to decrease our dependence on foreign oil, use more of this clean burning fuel, and improve the environment.

The Governor hopes to build on last year's success of the passage of full funding for Missouri's Qualified Ethanol Producer Incentive Fund by implementing a new ten percent ethanol standard for Missouri motor fuels. Missouri would be only the fourth state in the nation to adopt such a standard. Passage of this legislation will make Missouri a leader in both ethanol production and utilization.

The Missouri State Government Review Commission

The bi-partisan Missouri State Government Review Commission (MSGRC) has completed its recommendations for improving Missouri State Government and presented those recommendations to Governor Blunt. The Governor has:

- Directed all state help and information lines, excluding crisis hotlines, be consolidated to allow Missouri citizens a single point of entry for state services. The state currently operates more than 50 help, information, or assistance lines. The Commissioner of Administration will oversee this effort. (*MSGRC recommendation number 40*)
- Called for a reorganization of the Department of Economic Development into a new results-driven unit. The department reorganization that was recently completed will provide coordinated and efficient service to businesses and communities and will lead to improved job creation, increased private investment, increased state, local, and private coordination, and greater economic opportunities for Missourians. (*MSGRC recommendation number 48*)
- Directed the Department of Agriculture to give increased emphasis to agricultural business development services, strengthen animal health services and agricultural export services, and develop new programs for youth and beginning farmers. (*MSGRC recommendation number 14*)
- Directed the Department of Public Safety to create and oversee a statewide emergency communications system. The system will fill in the gaps to ensure that federal, state, and local agencies can effectively communicate. (*MSGRC recommendation number 75*)
- Directed the Office of Administration to determine if it would benefit the state to pursue a consolidated health plan across all agencies. (*MSGRC recommendation number 17*)

- Directed that the review of unclaimed property reports submitted to the State Treasurer's Office by insurance companies be transferred from the Department of Insurance to the State Treasurer's Office. (*MSGRC recommendation number 21*)
- Directed all executive departments to use available resources to create strategically planned, goal-oriented, performance-driven programs to produce higher quality public services. (*MSGRC recommendation number 29*)
- Directed the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to examine the best practices nationally to improve service delivery for severely handicapped children. (*MSGRC recommendation number 72*)
- Directed the Division of Fire Safety and the Missouri State Emergency Management Agency to coordinate hazardous materials training. (*MSGRC recommendation number 79*).

The Governor will continue to consider the remaining recommendations and will announce his intentions as they are finalized.